

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), the top Democrat on the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers (D-MI), and Reps. Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Steve Israel (D-NY), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL), and Jared Polis (D-CO) introduced the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act in order to extend critical federal civil rights protections to individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or familial status, disability, or source of income. Today, many in the LGBT community, many people paying rent with government housing vouchers, and numerous others routinely experience housing discrimination by landlords, banks, and real estate professionals.

"LGBT Americans, non-traditional families, and the disabled should not be subjected to housing discrimination at the hands of the unscrupulous or bigoted," said Nadler. "This legislation will ensure that the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act are actually protecting ALL Americans and guaranteeing people of any sexual orientation, gender identity, marital and familial status, and source of income the right to the housing they choose."

"We can't win the fight for equal housing opportunities without the HOME Act and its greater protections against housing discrimination," Conyers said. "I am pleased to introduce this bill with my colleagues as it will further the cause of the original Fair Housing Act and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King in promoting integrated communities."

"Fair housing must be a right for all Americans," said Towns. "It is therefore necessary that it be reflected in the laws that govern our nation. I fully support the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act which in effect will protect the rights of LGBT Americans as well as others who deserve equal protection under the law, regardless of their source of income. In New York City, over 101,000 families benefit from the Section 8 Choice Voucher program. This bill would protect each of those families against unfair discrimination in the rental market."

"In these tough economic times, the last thing that anyone should have to worry about when applying for a loan or filling out an apartment application is discrimination because of their sexuality orientation, gender identity or family status," said Israel. "I'm proud to join my colleagues in introducing the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act."

"For over 40 years, the Fair Housing Act has protected Americans from housing discrimination, but some groups not specifically mentioned in the Act still face discrimination," said Scott. "The HOME Act builds upon the Fair Housing Act by prohibiting housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income, or marital status. This is a long overdue reform that will ensure access to affordable housing to millions of Americans. This is the right thing to do and now is the right time to act."

"I have always committed myself to fighting discrimination wherever it occurs," said Hastings. "The need for equal housing opportunities knows no boundaries and it is high time that the Fair

Housing Act ensured that regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status, all Americans are afforded the right to fair housing."

"We applaud Senator Kerry and Representative Nadler for their efforts to bring the Fair Housing Act into the 21st Century," said Shanna L. Smith, National Fair Housing Alliance President and CEO. "These much-needed changes to the Act reflect our nation's commitment to creating stronger, more diverse and inclusive neighborhoods. Housing discrimination is wrong and runs counter to the American spirit of opportunity. It's time we leave intolerance and bigotry in America's dark history of senseless exclusion and instead continue to march on the path to equality."

The HOME Act would amend the Fair Housing Act by prohibiting discrimination in the sale or rental of housing, the financing of housing, and in brokerage services on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income, or marital status. The Act would also amend the Fair Housing Act's definition of "familial status" in order to more accurately reflect contemporary family arrangements – expanding the term to include "anyone standing in loco parentis" of one or more individuals who are not 18 years of age, thus providing non-traditional families with equal protection.

The Act would prohibit discrimination in lending on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. It would make clear that a seller or landlord has an ongoing obligation to refrain from engaging in housing discrimination, even after the purchase or the lease is signed. This will address cases like *Bloch v. Frischholz*, in which a condo association in Chicago prohibited a Jewish family from posting a mezuzah in accordance with their religious beliefs.

The Fair Housing Act, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, has protected people living in America from housing discrimination since 1968, when it passed in the immediate aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. Under the Act, it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or familial status. The Act also mandates that the federal government promote integrated communities.

While these measures were an important first step in the fight for equal housing opportunities, they have been thus far inadequate in keeping relevant with the times. People who are not currently protected by the Fair Housing Act regularly face open discrimination in the housing market. Landlords, real estate agents, and mortgage lenders often offer housing on different and discriminatory terms to LGBT individuals. LGBT individuals and non-traditional families also face harassment and potential violence. Home seekers who intend to pay for housing with government assistance face similar discrimination. People with disabilities too often face physical barriers when seeking a place to live. It is this gap in the law, the lack of accountability, and discrimination that the HOME Act wishes to address.

Text of the bill is attached as a PDF. Senator John Kerry (D-MA) today introduced companion legislation in the U.S. Senate.

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